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SUBJECT: DAILY SUMMARY OF JAPANESE PRESS 08/20/08

INDEX:

- (1) Defense Minister Hayashi positive about closing Futenma Air Station within three years; Moving alternative facility offshore difficult (Ryukyu Shimpo)
- (2) Futenma commander tells visiting Okinawa military base committee that clear zone is not in violation of U.S. safety standards (Ryukyu Shimpo)
- (3) SDF dispatch (Part 1): Extension of refueling mission-Barren rehash continues (Mainichi)
- (4) U.S. aircraft carrier crewmember arrested for murder, another incident of misconduct before the vessel's deployment to Japan (Kyodo)
- (5) Yokosuka-bound U.S. nuclear flattop's crewman arrested for alleged murder (Asahi)

ARTICLES:

- (1) Defense Minister Hayashi positive about closing Futenma Air Station within three years; Moving alternative facility offshore difficult

RYUKYU SHIMPO (Page 1) (Full)  
August 20, 2008

Defense Minister Yoshimasa Hayashi visited Okinawa Prefecture yesterday afternoon for the first time since taking office. He met with Gov. Hirokazu Nakaima at the prefectural office. In the

meeting, Nakaima sought a response from the government to Okinawa's request to lose the U.S. Marine Corps' Futenma Air Station within three years. He told Hayashi: "The government needs to negotiate with the U.S. side." Hayashi told reporters after the meeting: "After carrying out flying measurement research, if countermeasures are needed, we will consider them." He indicated that the government would respond in a positive manner based on the results of flying measurement research, which will start on Sept. 28.

Regarding the moving of the alternate facility for Futenma Air Station off shore, which the Okinawa prefectural government and Nago City have called for, Hayashi said in the meeting: "It is difficult to do so unless there are any logical reasons." He rejected anew Okinawa's demand that the government's plan be changed.

Nakaima told Hayashi in the meeting:

"I appreciate that you came to Okinawa soon after taking office. The residents of Okinawa wish that the excessive burden of U.S. military bases will be eased. I would like to exchange frank views with you from now on."

As to the relocation of Futenma Air Station, Nakaima said:

"In order to implement the realignment of U.S. bases in Japan, it is indispensable to gain local understanding and cooperation. I hope that the government will give sufficient consideration to local requests and that the relocation of Futenma Air Station will make progress as soon as possible."

TOKYO 00002293 002 OF 004

Nakaima demanded that Futenma Air Station be closed within three years and that the replacement facility be moved offshore.

Nakaima handed Hayashi a list of five requests that include the complete return of U.S. bases located south of Kadena Air Base and the nation's complete bearing of costs for removing unexploded bombs.

Hayashi said:

"The working team of the council has started discussion in detail. The discussion will not move forward without local understanding and cooperation. We have repeatedly said that it is difficult to (move the replacement facility off shore) without a logical reason. Under such circumstances, I would like you to boil down various matters."

Okinawa Vice Governors Zenki Nakazato and Katsuko Asato, the Defense Ministry's Defense Policy Bureau Director General Nobushige Takamizawa and Local Cooperation Bureau Director General Genzo Inoue were present at the meeting.

(2) Futenma commander tells visiting Okinawa military base committee that clear zone is not in violation of U.S. safety standards

RYUKYU SHIMPO (Page 2) (Full)  
August 20, 2008

The Okinawa Prefectural Assembly U.S. military base affairs special committee (Chaired by Kiyoko Tokashiki) yesterday visited Kadena Air Base and Futenma Air Station and received explanations on the bases' conditions. Tokashiki quoted Futenma Air Station commander Col. Leo A. Falcam as saying regarding the base's clear zone: "The zone is operated under U.S. law with adjustments being made as needed. It is operated within the scope of international aviation standards, so there is not a violation."

The U.S. Air Force and Marines aviation safety standards require the establishment of a clear zone prohibiting the use of land up to 900 meters from either end of a runway, an area that has a high probability of aircraft accidents.

Ginowan Mayor Yoichi Iha and others have pointed out that Futenma Air Station violates safety standards, citing the existence of an

elementary school in its clear zone.

Hearing the explanation, a committee member said: "Futenma is not based on U.S. standards." In response, Commander Falcam reportedly reiterated the view that the base is operated in accordance with U.S. safety standards, emphatically saying, "The base has been run while adjusting (the U.S. standards) as necessary."

Further, regarding pre-posting education for service members in connection with incidents and accidents by U.S. Marines, the commander was quoted as saying: "They all get a thorough education in the United States. A large number of incidents might be traceable to difficulty in adapting to Okinawan culture."

At Kadena AB, Tokashiki said to Public Affairs chief John Hutcheson: "Local residents have been tremendously affected by early-morning takeoffs and rapid-response drills. The minimum noise accord must be observed."

TOKYO 00002293 003 OF 004

(3) SDF dispatch (Part 1): Extension of refueling mission-Barren rehash continues

MAINICHI (Page 5) (Abridged)  
August 19, 2008

The Self-Defense Forces' overseas dispatch, which began with the Gulf War in 1991, used to be ancillary but became a primary task of its own as the Defense Agency was upgraded to its current ministry status last year. Diet debate over the SDF's overseas dispatch used to focus on its propriety-whether or not Japan should send SDF troops to foreign land. Nowadays, the focus is on how to create a stable legal framework for the SDF's overseas activities. However, Japan's course of action has been wavering not only with the international situation but also with the stance of the government of the day and trends in public opinion. The Diet, in its forthcoming extraordinary session, is expected to focus its debate on a government-planned bill extending the Maritime Self-Defense Force's refueling mission in the Indian Ocean. In addition, the Diet has also deliberated on such issues as amending or reinterpreting the Constitution and creating a permanent law for SDF activities overseas instead of enacting a time-limited special measures law each time. However, parliamentary discussions on these issues have repeatedly heated up and cooled down or gone back and forth to get nowhere.

"There can be various ways, including the option of having the Self-Defense Forces escort Japanese oil tankers. If the government is not (considering any other measures than refueling), that's neglectful." With this, Taro Aso, the new secretary general of the ruling Liberal Democratic Party, came up with his idea on Aug. 5 of tasking the MSDF with a new mission in the Indian Ocean instead of engaging the MSDF in refueling activities there. LDP General Council Chairman Takashi Sasagawa also made similar remarks. Their advocacy created a stir in the government and the LDP.

The government has been stressing how important the war on terror is. However, people are turning their eyes to the soaring gasoline prices and the newly introduced but controversial healthcare insurance plan for the elderly. People may say, "If you have free oil for the United States, you should supply that oil to domestic consumers." One LDP lawmaker fears that if the government is criticized in this way, the LDP would be at a disadvantage in a general election for the House of Representatives should it be dissolved. This lawmaker said, "If that is the case, the LDP should say the SDF will defend Japanese tankers." That can make an appeal to the public, he thought.

This, however, is a rehash of arguments already done. In April, the then defense minister, Shigeru Ishiba, replied to an interpellation in the Diet. At the time, Ishiba suggested the need for Japan to have a new law in order for the SDF to defend sea lanes for Japan's oil shipping. If the government chooses to create a new law, there will be an inevitable hurdle in store. In that case, the LDP and its coalition partner, the New Komeito, would have to take a second vote

in the House of Representatives in order to override the opposition-controlled House of Councillors' decision as the ruling coalition will have to do so in order to extend the new Antiterrorism Special Measures Law, under which the MSDF has been tasked with refueling services in the Indian Ocean. A senior official of the Defense Ministry grumbled, "If we say protecting

TOKYO 00002293 004 OF 004

Japan's oil is the kind of international cooperation, I don't think they will understand that."

"We will have to gain an edge in the election before thinking about our international contributions," said a ruling party executive. Some lawmakers in the ruling parties are also saying the new antiterror legislation should be carried over to next year's ordinary Diet session so that they will not be affected if and when the House of Representatives is dissolved for a general election—just as the ruling coalition is putting off a consumption tax hike that is needed for social security revenues.

(4) U.S. aircraft carrier crewmember arrested for murder, another incident of misconduct before the vessel's deployment to Japan

Kyodo (Online) (Full)  
12:36, August 20, 2008

August 19, Washington

A sailor from the USS George Washington, a U.S. Navy nuclear-powered aircraft carrier to be deployed to Yokosuka Naval Base in Kanagawa Prefecture, was arrested on Aug. 19 by local police in connection with a murder that occurred in a San Diego, California, suburb, the Stars and Stripes website reported on the same day.

The George Washington, which is under repair since a fire broke out onboard in May, was scheduled to re-depart for Japan as early as Aug. 21. Although there seems to be no change to its planned departure, persons concerned are shocked by yet another incident of misconduct committed by U.S. service members. Voices of concern are likely to grow louder in Japan.

According to the Stars and Stripes, the police have arrested two service members: Petty Officer 2nd Class Cloris Cannon, 26, from the George Washington and another 26-year-old petty officer 2nd class of a different unit. They got into a quarrel with two men in National City on Aug. 16, and the petty officer 2nd class who was with Cannon shot them, killing one. Cannon and the other suspect were arrested on suspicion of murder and assault.

(5) Yokosuka-bound U.S. nuclear flattop's crewman arrested for alleged murder

ASAHI (Online) (Full)  
August 20, 2008 (13:26)

WASHINGTON—Two sailors, including a 26-year-old petty officer second class from the USS George Washington, the first nuclear-powered aircraft carrier to be deployed to Japan, were arrested on Aug. 19 for their alleged involvement in a murder that took place in the suburbs of San Diego, according to the Stars & Stripes (online), a newspaper published for U.S. forces. The two sailors quarreled with two others there, and another 26-year-old petty officer second class from a different unit, who was with that crewman from the George Washington, fired a gun, killing one of the other two, the online story said. The George Washington caused a fire in May and is now under repair. She was slated to set sail on Aug. 21 for Yokosuka.

SCHIEFFER